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Missionary Letters and News

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY

The Arabian Mission



Number Fifty—April to June, 1904

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The Arabian Mission

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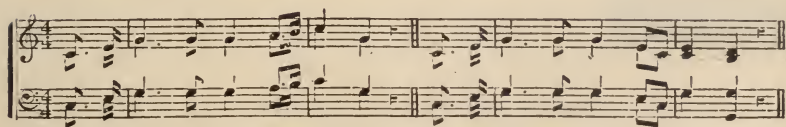
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Missionary Letters and News from Arabia

APRIL—JUNE, 1904

The Arabian Mission Hymn*

SONG. 8s & 5s.



I.

There's a land long since neglected,
There's a people still rejected,
But of truth and grace elected,
In His love for them.

II.

Softer than their night wind's fleeting
Richer than their starry tenting,
Stronger than their sands protecting,
Is His love for them.

III.

To the host of Islam's leading,
To the slave in bondage bleeding,
To the desert dweller pleading,
Bring his love to them.

IV.

Through the promise on God's pages,
Through His work in history's stages,
Through the cross that crowns the ages,
Show his love to them.

V.

With the prayer that still availeth,
With the host that still prevaieth.
With the love that never faileth,
Tell His love to them.

VI.

Till the desert's sons, now aliens,
Till its tribes and their dominions,
Till Arabia's raptured millions,
Praise His love of them.

J. G. LANSING.

* This being the *Fiftieth* number of our Quarterly it is appropriate to print once more the mission hymn which is the Marseillaise of our campaign against Islam. We invite all our contributors to sing it with us.

PECULIARITIES OF THE OMAN FIELD

REV. J. E. MOERDYK.



TO one who has spent some time in other fields on the peninsula the Oman field presents many peculiarities, and one sometimes thinks he has entered a new and strange place outside of Arabia. Perhaps one reason for this is that we enter by way of Muscat, which place, because of its proximity to the India and adjoining coasts, and because of its trade with those parts, and also because of its tribal and trade relations with people of Zanzibar, has adopted many customs foreign to the Arab in other parts of Arabia.

Oman was in years back settled by pure Arabs, and in general these are still the people of the country back of Muscat; but the population of the coast towns can no longer claim this distinction. There are natives from India, from Beluchistan, from Persia, and a large number from Africa. Of these the natives from India—the Bania or merchant class—have kept to their own manners and customs, but the others have pretty well mingled with the Arabs, and all have adopted something from the others. These foreigners, if we may so call them, are really the active, although not the ruling class, as said above; those from India constitute the merchant class. The Persians, who are quite numerous, also engage in trade. But of Muscat and Matrah, at least, it may quite truly be said that no native to the soil takes up this work. The Beluchians mostly enter the Sultan's service as soldiers and otherwise constitute the laboring class.

The Africans are laborers, it is true, but in quite a different sense, for they serve as slaves, and not of their own choice. The slave-trade, although greatly reduced on account of England's vigilance, has not yet been abandoned, and every year slaves are brought into the country and sold. Of late, also, these traders have resorted to capturing or buying natives from across the Arabian Sea, from the Mekran coast, and selling these together with natives from Africa. The Arabs are the owners of property both in the towns and in the country, and they engage in trade only so far as they dispose of their crop of dates or other produce. This question of manual labor is carried to such an extreme that they prefer to beg, if necessary, rather than stoop to the position of a Beluchian or negro.

It is quite true of all Oman that its people love feasting, and always seem to be at it. One can distinguish the noise of the Beluchians from the dancing and tom-tom music of the negroes, and the Arab drum and dance are quite different from both; but all indulge, on feast days especially, and at other times as well. That such employment is elevating and a school for good morals no one will believe. The use of intoxicating liquor is religiously forbidden, and yet several merchants from India are in Muscat getting rich in dispensing the drink to Arabs and to slaves. Of late a Banian has imported a still, and is distilling liquor for local consumption. The Arabs inland make a light wine which they excuse by calling it grape juice and drink freely. Gambling, also prohibited, is not uncommon. Profligacy, practiced openly in the towns, increases and seems to know no prosecution. Bad language, strangely enough, is not encouraged, and natives are very easily insulted and angered if strangers speak to them in harsh terms. Arabs, strangers, are often set upon because they use slang terms which here amount to swearing and cursing.

Hospitality is an overdone virtue in Oman, and the Arabs, especially, pride themselves on this. Practically speaking, all the homes are open to the stranger, and he is well entertained. This has its good side, giving abundant opportunity to the missionary; but there is a difficulty, too, because the host always expects a good gift in return for his trouble. In fact, this is carried to such an extreme that I once heard it said that no decent person salutes except that he expects a present for his trouble. The missionary's tours, therefore, are expensive beside the trouble it gives him to select the presents and to carry them with him in travelling.

Oman's government is really patriarchal in form. The Sultan in Muscat is the acknowledged Imam, or God's appointed, and he has his appointees as governors in all the important towns; but, besides, every town has its "sheikh in learning" and its sheikh in civil affairs. Between them the affairs of the town are amicably arranged. The Sultan has given the missionaries every liberty to visit the country and to take Bibles with them. With letters to the different governors, he usually gives them an open road wherever they purpose going. The great difficulty in touring is the trouble in securing proper means for travelling, both because of exorbitant charges asked and because of the inferior quality of beasts of burden necessary for long trips. The owners of such animals, too, most generally prove a burden because of their

custom that they be treated and served as guests rather than as hired servants. Tribal feuds are also a hindrance. The old custom of blood for the shedding of blood is maintained throughout, and the Sultan is powerless to stop it, so that bands of robbers or of murderers are always to be expected and reports of bloodshed are almost of weekly occurrence.

A strong, successful worker in Oman needs to be a linguist, and one might almost add that he needs the extra gift to make a language when necessary. In Muscat there are as many as ten or twelve languages spoken. Five languages, at least, are daily used in the bazaar. But not one of these is used carefully and correctly. Beluchi has borrowed of the Hindustani and of the Swahili. The African likewise has borrowed; and the Arab has adopted words from several outside languages. Muscat's bazaar vernacular is indeed peculiar and to be matched by none other. It is not unusual to come across natives who at times do not understand their own language. The Arabic deserves the name of Omanee. Besides having adopted from outside languages it has many words of its very own which cannot be found in Arabic books, nor can they be traced to foreign roots. Arabs from other localities coming to Oman must learn a language new to them because of these strange words and expressions. There are many, many people in Oman who never hear the Gospel, although they may oftentimes meet the missionary of colporters. The reason is, that they do not understand the language of the preacher.

Mohammedanism is, of course, the prevailing religion. The Banians from India have, under British protection, maintained their own religion, and in Muscat have their own temples and places for worship. The Africans and Beluchians, although having adopted Mohammedanism, still retain much of their own customs in worship. The drum-dances, etc., for instance, are maintained as part of their mode of worship; and the Arabs do not prohibit this nor do they attempt to teach them a better way. Of the many sects in Islam, several are represented in Oman. All the Persians are Shiahs, and there are Sunnis, and also of the Wahabis. But the sect native to the district is designated by the name of Abadha, which is one of the six divisions of the Khawarij, or "Seceders."

The Khawarij first came into existence in A. D. 655-660, when Ali was Khalifah. Later they took refuge in Oman. Some of them also settled in Yemen, and in Northern Africa there are traces of the sect.

Some one has named this sect "the Calvinists of Islam." "Their doctrines are gloomy and morose, hard and fanatical." Many of them are strict fatalists, and hold not only that God has decided as to their last fate, but because of this decree their life here, whether for good or for evil, is not to be seriously taken into account. They declare that of the seventy-three sects of Islam theirs only is the orthodox, and the general body of Moslems are unbelievers. "We approximate not to any sect, nor does any sect approximate to us." To all whose faith differs from their own they say: "We conclude such to be devoted to ruin; enemies of God; infidels, whose portion hereafter shall be in Gehenna forever." To them every sin is of the same degree, and they claim to enhance the enormity of sin. But much of this is true with them in theory only. In practice they are more liberal, and largely so because of their sinful natures and appetites.

The story is told of how coffee drinking became lawful, whereas at first it was as sinful as smoking. A certain pious man was desirous of passing the whole night in prayer, but sleep overcame him. He resorted to the drinking of coffee, and ever after that it was pronounced a helpful drink and therefore allowed. The same man, who is so careful in lauding his own sect, and enlarges upon their devout attitudes in prayer—neither looking to the right nor the left for any reason whatever, and in humility before God looking towards the earth only—will finally turn and say that every one has his religion and God knows best. They are quite liberal sometimes in the interpretation of the Koran. Many passages interpreted literally by other sects are by them declared to be figurative. On the whole, they hold less strongly to the commentaries and traditions, and are therefore more easily approached on many subjects. Their ceremonies are much simpler than in other sects, and there is less external display on occasions such as the birth of a child or funerals.

On the other hand, there are quite a number very superstitious, and in places there are persons who professedly hold communication with the jinn and spirits, and can therefore be of service in sickness, etc. In spite of all their claims to orthodoxy and piety, one is astonished at the gross wickedness in this district. Many there are of the better class who decry this condition of affairs, but I have not yet learned of one who has ventured advice or offered a remedy. None of the evil-doers are prosecuted except by the offended and injured party, and if sufficient restitution is provided by the offender he is not punished, but remains

at large, having as good a name and reputation as the most pious. It is revolting to hear them confess to the wicked state of affairs, only to conclude by practically placing the blame with God by saying: "God knows best. He is merciful." Conversation upon spiritual topics is most difficult with such people, and more often none of them are willing to engage in such conversation. This appears to be the greatest obstacle to the missionary's work. Bigotry and fanaticism are present as among all Moslems, but this is not to be compared with their awful indifference, caused by a long life of enjoyment in sin which is either covered or made easy by their religion.

Recognizing the peculiarities and difficulties of the field, Alexander Mackay's plea for Oman has new meaning to us. He pled for a *strong* mission; for men especially selected, strong in the Spirit of Jesus and strong in linguistic ability. He thought of conquering Oman for Christ and in this way helping to save Africa unto Christ. Have we established and are we manning a mission *strong* in numbers and in ability to save these peoples?

FROM BAHREIN TO BUSRAH

MISS JENNIE A. SCARDEFIELD.



WOULD you like to go with us for a trip up the Persian Gulf? Well, have your things all well packed and ready, for we do not know when a Persian steamer will appear, and we must be ready to go aboard, nor do we know how long the steamer will remain at Bahrein when she does arrive.

Two weeks of waiting and the Henry B—— is seen coming in. We learn she is to leave in three days—and *perhaps* will go to Busrah. It is better to run the risk than wait an uncertain time for the next Persian steamer, since mail steamers do not go direct.

So early Monday morning we place all our boxes, trunks, chairs, etc., on donkeys to be taken to a small boat. They return for us, and we are taken through the shallow water to this boat and are poled off to the deeper water, then set sail for the steamer. We find no accommodations for cabin passengers, but the captain very kindly consents to vacate his cabin, which is a large one, and we are made quite comfortable.

Bidding good-by to our friends, we expect to sail about noon ; then we hear perhaps in the afternoon, and at five o'clock the captain tells us we may get off in the morning. We expect a pleasant trip to our first port, which is Bushire, and plan to study and write.

But shortly after the anchor is lifted you will feel like remaining very quiet, as the steamer rolls about so you can not stand or walk. Of course we are all seasick, but it will only last two days and we will then be in Bushire. The boat becomes more steady and we know we are nearing land. Yes, here comes the pilot to say whether the steamer is to continue on her way to Busrah or not. The word is soon brought. The *Henry B.* is to return to Bombay. That means that we must gather up our things, and leave the steamer at once. But where? you ask. Are there missionaries at Bushire? Oh, here is a place where there is not a Christian missionary, but the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society lives here, and on his kind invitation we will remain over night at his home. Has the journey thus far been trying? I think not, for we have had the joy of giving the Gospel printed in Arabic to a number of natives, and seeing them read the story of salvation for the first time, and we also had the opportunity of talking to some women who could not read.

To-morrow (Friday) the fast mail arrives here on its way to Busrah, and we will be able to continue our journey, with the prospect of ten days' quarantine awaiting Miss Lutton and myself.

In the afternoon we are comfortably settled on board the British India steamer *Kasara*, and there are other passengers which makes it very pleasant.

Now we sit outside and enjoy the beautiful scenery of the river, for we are entering the *Shat-el-Arab* river, and on either bank are seen the beautiful date gardens all along for miles ; just on the shore can be seen here and there women washing their clothes.

Creeks run in and through the date gardens, as irrigation is the mode of watering these gardens. And on this steamer, also, we have had opportunity for service, for a hungry heart has been made glad by a talk about the way of salvation ; others accept portions of Scripture and are seen reading them and seem pleased to have us speak to them about the living Prophet.

Do you see that small building yonder with low outbuildings? We are told that is where we will have to spend at least six days of quarantine. We can remain on board this steamer for the first few days

however. The Russian Consul-General, who is on board with his two sisters, will also have to be in quarantine with us, and special orders have been given to thoroughly clean the four small rooms and make them more habitable, and so we find (except for the abundance of fleas) our stay in quarantine very pleasant. We are permitted to join our friends in Busrah even earlier than we expected. Glad to be at our appointed station; we will now take up regular work and study.

TWO WEEKS AT THE HOSPITAL

LUCY M. PATTERSON, M. D.



IT was quite my expectation, in the absence of a qualified physician, to find the medical work at Bahrein quite disorganized, if not extinct. Imagine my surprise, on arriving two weeks ago, to find the beautiful and commodious hospital working on full time and at full speed. It was pretty well filled with patients, and on an average there were sixty cases being treated every morning at the dispensaries, to say nothing of the calls attended to in the homes of the people. Moreover, the range of cases was not of the "simple stomatitis" or "ingrowing toe-nail" type, either.

During my two weeks here we have had twenty operations on the eye, one amputation, the removal of a large tumor, and numerous teeth extracted. In medicine we have had pleurisy, pneumonia, tuberculosis, tetanus, smallpox, leprosy, paraplegia, different varieties of heart-lesions, and other interesting cases. In gynæcology we have had the usual run of inflammations and displacements, with atresia for a specialty.

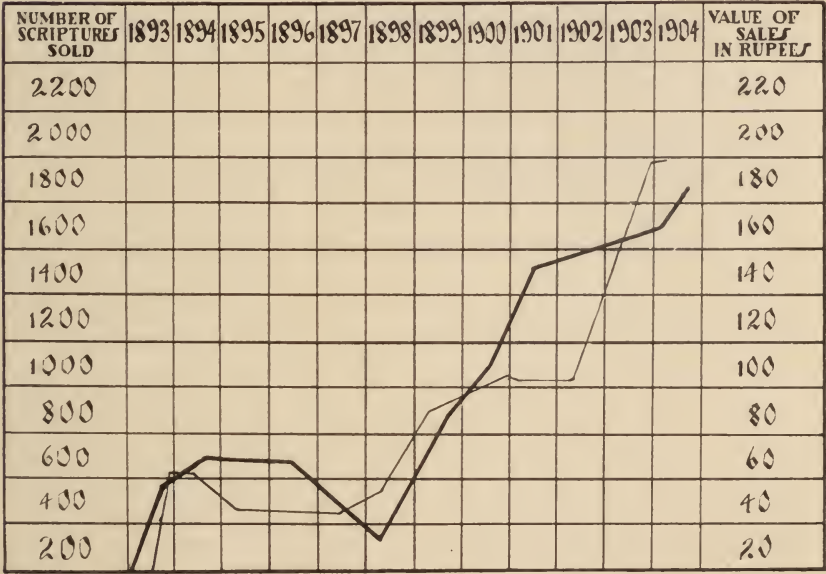
One of the peculiarities of the people here is that they never present themselves for treatment until the disease is far advanced, but of course there is an excuse for them in some cases, as they may have suffered for years before there was a hospital to come to. About 75 per cent. of the people seem to have eye-trouble of some sort. Trachoma, trichiasis, ulceration and opacity are the commonest forms; yet inside a week one meets everything from simple ophthalmia to panophthalmitis. In fact, one would have to be a specialist in every branch of medicine and surgery to do justice to the amount and range of material which pre-

sents itself here for treatment. The work is so great and the problems are so practical that there is not a minute to meditate on pancreatitis nor the chemical and molecular changes in pseudo-hypertrophic pulmonary osteo-arthropathy!

Thanks to the engineering skill of Dr. Zwemer, the windmill is working splendidly, so that we feel quite up to date with modern conveniences in water-supply. When one looks at the large and beautiful hospital (none too large or fine for the work which is being done there) we can not help feeling sorry for the children and school teachers crowded into the small rooms which they at present occupy on the lower floor of the mission house. To say the least, it is unsanitary.

TEN YEARS' BIBLE WORK

S. M. ZWEMER, D.D.



TEN YEARS' BIBLE SALES AT BAHREIN. SALES ———
VALUE - - - - -



THE above table speaks for itself. It is about ten years ago that the distribution of Scriptures began at Bahrein station, amid much opposition and persecution of our colporter. The entering of the wedge was not without many a hard blow. But the Bible has gained a foothold and our dingy little shop with a shelf of books has grown to be a well-lighted room with seats and a table and a large stock of books in the best location possible. The increase in circulation represents progress as well as conflict.

In 1893, with every effort, we were able to sell only a couple of hundred portions of God's Word. Last year from this station alone fifty-one Bibles, fifty-one New Testaments and one thousand four hundred and thirty-one portions were distributed, *nearly all by sale*, among Moslems. This year we hope the total circulation will reach near the two thousand line.

In 1893 our field was limited to the nearest villages and our force was one colporter. Now we tour to the Oman Coast, Hassa and all the island-group and have a "daughter" Bible shop at Kuwait. When work began prejudice was strong and men fought the very paper and cover of the small Gospels; they were torn up and burnt. Now *that* method is rare. The struggle is regarding the *contents*. Moslems buy the book to study it and to compare it with the Koran. In that kind of conflict the Bible has never yet been worsted.

In 1893 we were at Bahrein in fear and trembling, because at any time the door that was ajar might have been slammed in our faces. To-day there is no question even among the Mullahs that our Bible depot has come to stay, and that the one message at the Mason Memorial Hospital is from the Book of Books. What does the downward curve in the table signify? It means that, for lack of reinforcements, our furlough in 1897-98 meant a decrease in the Bible-work at this station. You can not make good bricks without straw nor keep the work at a station going without a resident missionary. We hope there will never more be a downward curve in the evangelistic work at any of our stations for this cause.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note the curve of values and see that Moslems *paid* for Bibles last year one hundred and ninety-one rupees, or about \$63.00. And this in a land where the daily wage of a laborer is twelve cents and the Gospel the cheapest book on the market.

BUSRAH CHRONICLES

REV. F. J. BARNY.



THE cholera has been threatening here for over three months. It has not been very virulent yet. There are about five deaths a day reported on the average, some days none, some many more than the average. With the approach of the hot weather, prospects are not bright, but our trust is in God, who is able to stay this plague. While, as said, the visitation so far has not been severe, it has had serious effect on our work. When the disease first appeared quarantine was put on against the city in all directions, and so zealously that one of the colporters was compelled to do nearly twenty days of it before he could proceed to Amara. In the last month or six weeks many of the people have left the place, so that now the bazaars are only half open, and some days they seem quite deserted. Our shop here has fewer visitors than ever and fewer sales. One of the colporters lost a child while he was away on tour. He had to be recalled, and thus the work also suffered. Thus conditions have been very untoward and the results are small sales.

A long tour is being made by Mr. Van Ess. The distances covered are the same as usual in going to Nasariyeh, where he is, but his stay is longer than that of any missionary before him. This has been my wish and ideal for years, and one long stay like this will do more good than many flying visits. His letters are most encouraging and the next Quarterly will, no doubt, contain an account of his experiences.

Woman's Work for Women has been begun in earnest at this station. Mrs. Dr. Worrall now has her own clinic for women. She has more than enough to do with dispensary every day and numerous outside calls. Just a short time ago Miss Lutton and Miss Scardefield were transferred here from Bahrein. The latter, being a newcomer, is giving her whole time to language study; the former, having lived privately with the missionaries at Bahrein for several years, acquired enough of the language to pass the first examination, and having been appointed a missionary by the trustees, she is working here among the women, besides preparing for the second examination.

New quarters for the missionaries have been secured. While under

ordinary circumstances moving is not a matter worth chronicling, yet it costs so much in strength and time that it would be good policy to own property or rent for a long term of years. Either alternative means a good round sum of ready money to clinch a bargain when offered. This last removal has added much to the comfort and health of all the missionaries, and has been beneficial to the work, especially the medical. Dr. Worrall now has the dispensary in his own house, and if the accommodations are not ample there is room for Mrs. Worrall's work, which was not the case before. For thorough efficiency the doctors ought to have a separate house for their work, with several light and airy rooms for each.

English services on Sundays have been so well attended that it is worth noting. For the first time in my experience here these services have been asked for. To grant such a request was not a duty, but a privilege, and our prayer is that these simple services may be blessed of God as a means for preserving and strengthening the faith of these people, who are far removed from the Christian homes and friendships of the home-land.

Recently two inquirers have been sent by us out of the country. This is something we do only under extraordinary circumstances, as there are always such as are ready to take a trip, all expenses paid. Even after the greatest care one of the above turned out a disappointment, the other remains faithful. The necessity of doing this is the severest trial in the work at this station. At present it seems as though we could never gather even a small band of converts here. As soon as a man becomes a hopeful inquirer he has to flee. But the Lord built up his church within the Roman Empire and can no doubt do it within the Ottoman.

NOTES

Rev. James Cantine will be on his way across the Atlantic before this meets the eye of the reader. He will probably arrive at Muscat about Oct. 1. He has done good work among the churches during his furlough and returns to his field with vigorous health and happy hope.

Dr. and Mrs. Sharon J. Thoms, with their children, also will soon be on their way to Bahrein. Physicians both, they have been wisely engaged in such medical study as they needed to keep themselves in

touch with the thought and practice of the day, and in such other missionary work at home as was possible.

Dr. Arthur K. Bennett has been appointed to the Arabian Mission. He is a graduate of the Medical School of the University of Michigan, and will spend the coming year in further study in Europe. His home is in Watkins, N. Y.

Miss Jessie N. Vail has also been commissioned by the Arabian Mission, and expects to go to her field with Dr. and Mrs. Thoms. She is a graduate of Michigan University, and has been principal of the High School of Saline, Mich.

The Church bids all these friends a hearty Godspeed and follows them with affection and prayer.

“Eternal Father! Strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bid'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!”

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